NUMB. LXVI.

The GUARDIAN.

Sæpe tribus lectis videas cœnare quaternos:
E quibus unus avet quavis aspergere cunctos,
Præter eum qui præbet aquam: post hunc quoque— Hor.

Wednesday, May 27. 1713.

THE following Letter is full of Imagination, and, in a fabulous manner, sets forth a Connexion between Things, and an Alliance between Persons that are very distant and remote to common Eyes. I think I know the Hand to be that of a very ingenious Man, and shall therefore give it the Reader without further Preface.

To the GUARDIAN.

SIR,

'THere is a Sett of Mankind, who are wholly employed in the Ill-natured Office of gathering up a Collection of Stories that lessen the Reputation of others, and spreading them Abroad with a certain Air of Satisfaction. Perhaps, indeed, an innocent unmeaning Curiosity, a Desire of being informed concerning those we live with, or a Willingness to profit by Reflection upon the Actions of others, may sometimes afford an Excuse, or sometimes a Defence, for Inquisitiveness; but certainly it is, beyond all Excuse, a Transgression against Humanity to carry the Matter further, to tear off the Dressings, as I may say, from the Wounds of a Friend, and expose them to the Air in cruel Fits of Diversion; and yet we have something more to bemoan, an Outrage of a higher Nature, which Mankind is guilty of when they are not content to spread the Stories of Folly, Frailty and Vice, but even enlarge them, or invent new ones, and blacken Characters that we may appear ridiculous or hateful to one another. From such Practices as these it happens, that some feel a Sorrow, and others are agitated with a Spirit of Revenge, that Scandals or Lies are told, because another has told such before, that Resentments and Quarrels arise, and Affronts and Injuries are given, received and multiplied in a Scene of Vengeance.

'All this I have often observed with abundance of Concern, and having a perfect Desire to further the Happiness of Mankind, I lately set my self to consider the Causes from whence such Evils arise, and the Remedies which may be applied. Whereupon I shut my Eyes to prevent a Distraction from outward Objects, and a while after shot away, upon an impulse of Thought, into the *World of Ideas*, where abstracted Qualities became visible in such Appearances as were agreeable to each of their Natures.

'That part of the Country, where I happened to light, was the most Noisie that I had ever known. The Winds whistled, the Leaves rustled, the Brooks rumbled, the Birds chatter'd, the Tongues of Men were heard, and the Eccho mingled something of every Sound in its Repetition, so that there was a strange Confusion and Uproar of Sounds about me. At length, as the Noise still encreased, I could discern a Man habited like a Herald (and as I afterwards understood) called *Novelty*, that came forward proclaiming a Solemn Day to be kept at the House of *Common Fame*. Immediately behind him advanced three Nymphs, who had monstrous Appearances. The first of these was *Curiosity*, habited like a Virgin, and having an hundred Ears upon her Head to serve in her Enquiries. The second of these was *Talkativeness*, a little better grown, she seemed to be like a young Wife, and had an hundred Tongues to spread her Stories. The third was *Censoriousness*, habited like a Widow, and surrounded with an hundred Squinting Eyes of a malignant Influence, which so obliquely darted on all around, that it was impossible to say which of them had brought in the Informations she boasted of. These, as I was informed, had been very instrumental in preserving and rearing *Common Fame*, when upon her Birth-day she was shuffled into a Crowd, to escape the search which *Truth* might have made after her and her Parents. *Curiosity* found her there, *Talkativeness* conveyed her away, and *Censoriousness* so nursed her up, that in a short time she grew to a prodigious Size, and obtained an Empire over the Universe; wherefore the *Power*, in Gratitude for these Services, has since advanced them to her highest Employments. The next who came forward in the Procession was a light Damsel, called *Credulity*, who carried behind them the Lamp, the Silver Vessel with a Spout, and other Instruments proper for this solemn Occasion. She had formerly seen these three together, and conjecturing, from the number of their